

## Improving Nutrition and Increasing Physical Activity

From 1987 to 1999, overweight and obesity increased dramatically among U.S. adults, and now obesity has reached epidemic proportions. More than 60% of adults are overweight or obese, and the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the last 30 years. Between 10% and 15% of Americans aged 6–17 years are overweight.

### Effects of Physical Inactivity and Unhealthy Diets

- Poor diet and physical inactivity lead to 300,000 deaths each year—second only to tobacco use.
- People who are overweight or obese increase their risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis-related disabilities, and some cancers.
- Not getting an adequate amount of exercise is associated with needing more medication, visiting a physician more often, and being hospitalized more often.

### Costs

- The direct medical costs associated with physical inactivity was \$29 billion in 1987 and nearly \$76.6 billion in 2000.
- The annual cost of obesity in the United States is about \$100 billion.
- After controlling for physical limitations and socioeconomic status, researchers found that more than 12% of the annual medical costs of inactive people with arthritis is associated with their inactivity.

### Effectiveness of Increasing Physical Activity

Modest, regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk of dying of coronary heart disease (the nation's leading cause of death) and decreases the risk for colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Physical activity also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; and reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression.